

Service Learning as an Instructional Strategy for the Preparation of Teachers

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Abstract

This paper addresses the strengths and challenges of university-based service learning projects, using preservice elementary teachers in an undergraduate social studies methods course as a model for implementing service learning in university courses. The goal of the project was to provide future teachers with the motivation and experience in facilitating service learning projects as a means of promoting student equity, social responsibility, and social justice. The carryover of this attitude and response to the first year of the teaching career is considered. Three cases of teachers are presented to share findings that focus on issues of context, teacher characteristics, understanding of the service learning pedagogy, and the responsiveness of students to the approach. Implications and recommendations for including service learning pedagogy in university courses are discussed.

Keywords: Service learning, elementary teacher education, social studies methods.

Service learning is an instructional approach that engages K-16 students in service-related activities while connecting the experience to course curricula so students have the opportunity to learn academic content while applying that knowledge in service to their community. This model is predicated on student involvement and student ownership of the experience to make it meaningful and personally relevant. The study university defines service learning as:

An experience-based form of pedagogy in which students, faculty, and community partners work together to integrate and apply empirically-grounded knowledge in authentic settings to address the needs of the community and meet instructional objectives using action and critical reflection to prepare students for careers and to become meaningful members of a just and democratic society. (University of Utah)

Over the last fifteen years, researchers have engaged in research that has resulted in a groundswell of noise about the value of including service learning in the K-12 public school, the university, and the college curriculum (Lewis, 2004; Wade, 1995, 2001). Increased self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as a stronger interest in school and a sense

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of social responsibility, are a few of the outcomes that have resulted for students given the opportunity to engage in service learning (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Wade, 1995). Historically, a significant responsibility of higher education's role in society has been to educate citizens for democracy (Kezar, 2005). Today, many universities and colleges have started to embed service learning as a form of citizenship, and to fully engage in the underlying values of their mission to promote social action, awareness, and justice education (Kezar, 2005; Lewis, 2004). Participation in service learning is increasing at the university level and learning more about it through research will enhance the quality and viability of service learning opportunities and experiences (Billig, 2003).

At the focus university, a campus-wide commitment to service learning is developing through emphasis in courses and professional development opportunities for faculty. For university students, a service learning experience in a course is the chance to make theory and practice come together in fulfilling a community need. Service learning has been implemented in a variety of disciplines across the university and college setting. Subject areas as disparate as geography, business, and nursing can utilize service learning projects to enhance the undergraduate and graduate student, and faculty member experience (Govekar & Richi, 2007; Lewis, 2004; Parece & Aspaas, 2007; Schwartz & Laughlin, 2008). Through these experiences, students gain an awareness of their connectedness to the community and the relevance of the subject they are studying to the community and society. Subjects studied in their university courses can begin to take on more meaning and importance because of the direct applicability, and students can gain more intrinsic motivation to understand the subject matter (Govekar & Richi, 2007; Lewis, 2004; Schwartz & Laughlin, 2008).

Much of the research on service learning has focused on students in teacher education programs (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001). Their experiences, however, match the experiences of other undergraduate students in courses that have a service learning component. In addition, the experiences of university faculty members who elect to go beyond their traditional classroom roles to learn how to incorporate service learning into their university courses have parallels to those of future teachers in teacher education programs, as both are learning how to engage a classroom of students in this new form of education. Therefore, teacher education courses can serve as a powerful and effective model for the process of learning about, incorporating, and assessing the impact of service learning for both faculty members and university students.

For students in teacher education programs, therefore, and university faculty members, service learning has particular relevance and importance because not only are they engaged in the service learning process for personal growth, they also have the opportunity to impact a classroom of students through this type of learning. For teachers, in other words, service learning becomes a social justice enterprise that shows promise for helping them develop strategies for engaging all students in responsive and respectful learning experiences, as is the goal of public and higher education (Kezar, 2005). Further, engaging in service learning experiences as K-16 teachers helps one to understand that teaching is both a moral and political act (Donahue, 1999). As a result of this, faculty

members and teacher candidates learn that service learning is one way to engage students as active citizens (Kezar, 2005).

In this study, we focus on the strengths and challenges of using service learning in teacher education courses as a model for the issues involved for faculty members and students in any university or college course. The issues discussed can be applied to both faculty members currently engaged, or considering using service learning in their courses, and their students. When considering the need for research on service learning: One question has to do with the relationship between K-12 and higher education. Service learning has penetrated both sets of institutions, and therefore, has begged the question about the relationships between these two sets of institutions, especially around their service learning initiatives. (Howard, 2003, p. 8)

We endeavor to explore potential connections between these two settings in this research.

Service Learning in Teacher Education Programs

Although service learning can be used successfully in any teacher preparatory methods course, social studies methods is an appropriate place for teacher candidates to have service learning experiences because of the natural connection between service learning projects that benefit the community and the civic goals of social studies education. Service learning is an opportunity for teacher candidates to learn more about teaching and learning by engaging students in projects that are meaningful and relevant to the larger community. Doing so during teacher preparation offers the chance to prepare teachers who may be more committed to service learning as a classroom teacher because they have tools, knowledge, and experience in the model.

In many teacher education programs, there are emphases on culturally and socially responsive attitudes towards teaching and instructors utilize these models as a component of their courses. Often, an outcome of this in social studies methods courses is the embedding of a service learning experience to help teacher candidates better realize the social and cultural complexity of teaching, while exploring the issues of social studies curriculum and instruction.

In the context of social studies methods in this teacher education program, instructors chose to have students do service learning with their elementary students in the field. This ensures that teacher candidates have the opportunity to try the pedagogy and reflect on the outcomes for individual students as engaged members of the classroom and school community. Instructors strived to ensure that students understood the difference between service and service learning. Research has demonstrated that service learning is a complex practice for a novice teacher to implement and that teacher educators must provide support and a realistic vision for implementing service learning in order to see effective and consistent use in the future classroom (Cepello, Davis & Hill-Ward, 2003).

Instructors want to provide the support teacher candidates need to work with their children so that they are guided in the experience of moving from the theories of service

learning to the actual practice and demonstrating relevance for university learning experiences. Doing so allows further opportunity for reflection on students and their needs to ensure that teacher candidates are conscious of their students as learners and members of the classroom community and the larger community around them. Further, this kind of experience is potentially relevant to preparing future teachers for the complexities of diverse classrooms and communities (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Buchanan, Baldwin & Rudisill, 2002; Donahue, 1999) because it forces them to stop and view the world in which their teaching takes place and to recognize their students and their needs as an active part of that teaching process.

Research Objectives

This study examines the stated and implicit philosophical social studies teaching and learning stances of elementary teacher candidates and early career teachers. This is a longitudinal study and data on both the attitudes towards and actual classroom practices centered on service learning, an exploration of teachers' rationales for choosing (or not) to do service learning in the elementary school as well as the institutional conditions that support or constrain such preferences, and the relevance of the university learning experiences as an influence on classroom teaching. The goal is to determine whether teacher candidates develop attitudes and instructional rationales that are in favor of service learning as an effective practice of social studies instruction as a result of their methods course experiences. Further, we attempt to determine whether these attitudes play out in the future classroom practices of teacher candidates as they choose (or not) to engage in service learning in their own classrooms to determine the lasting nature of university learning experiences on actual professional practice, something missing from the research and existing literature on service learning (Howard, 2003).

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

This study includes data from the senior year in the teacher preparation program and into the first year of a teacher's career. The data collected represents materials from students in two cohorts of the social studies methods course ($N = 57$ for the first cohort of teacher candidates and $N = 65$ for the second cohort), taught in the fall. From the first cohort, three teachers agreed to be followed for the first year of their careers to talk about their experiences with service learning in their own classrooms. These three teachers completed the social studies methods course as a part of the first cohort participating in the study and are all teaching in school districts within 45 minutes of the university.

Surveys

Upon completing student teaching at the end of the senior year, each teacher candidate completed a survey that summarized their experiences with and attitudes towards service learning. These surveys show whether teacher candidates did additional service learning projects with their students during the spring student teaching semester. They also describe the attitudes towards service learning as the candidates prepared to move forward into responsibility for their own classroom. Finally, these surveys help us to see whether

teacher candidates appreciated the connections between service learning as a pedagogy and the opportunity to create an equitable classroom learning environment.

Artifacts

During all phases, researchers also maintained a collection of artifacts from various aspects of the study. These materials include field notes from the social studies methods course collected by a researcher who observed all sessions related to service learning, along with lesson plans with classroom materials and observation notes from the instructor. Student produced artifacts were also collected, including: project proposals, relevant emails, final project papers and brochures created by each group for presentation at the end of the semester.

Interviews

During the first year of teaching, each participant was interviewed. These interviews probe closely the understanding teachers have for service learning in their classrooms and the affordances and constraints that make it possible or impossible for early career teachers to engage in service learning. Further, these interviews help us to see if the situation changes with time and familiarity with issues like context, core curriculum, and student learning needs.

Analysis

The analysis of the study focuses on the development of cases of a teacher's rationale and practice in teaching social studies from teacher preparation during the senior year through the first year of teaching experience. This longitudinal study looks at the bridge between theoretical beliefs and classroom practices as these cases provide an in-depth study of the choices and attitudes of a teacher as well as the actual experiences he/she has in implementing service learning (Yin, 2003).

From the set of teachers, we present three cases of teachers that describe the larger issues in becoming a service learning teacher. Initially, each case was analyzed independently. Broad categories were identified in the data focusing on initial patterns and perceptions of critical issues in the interview transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that were refined through comparison with the artifacts from the preservice experience. Moving through the cases, these categories were refined and each case was revisited by looking closely at the experiences of both preservice and practicing teachers to illuminate issues of context and position. We chose to engage in a cyclical process of analyzing and writing about the data in order to provide ourselves with constant reminders of context and the influence it has on the experience. Memos on each category were compared and refined by looking carefully at the overlap between the ideas reflected in each. After working on each step of the data analysis process on a case by case basis, cross-case analysis was done to identify broader themes and issues of service learning pedagogy and practice that exist across cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The cases included here are representative

of issues presented and experiences as early career teachers. The next section describes each teacher and her relevant personal and professional background.

Participants

Mindy, a first grade student teacher and then a first grade teacher, works in a year round school that is currently overenrolled and has a high population of Hispanic students, many of whom are English language learners. Mindy is one of eight new teachers of the 11 first grade teachers, taking on a leadership role in her team even as a beginning teacher. She was a non-traditional student at the university and is in her 30's with three children. Prior to enrolling in the teacher preparation program, Mindy worked in day care settings. Her passion for first grade is evident and her attitude towards her teaching role is enthusiastically confident despite the challenges of her school context. Mindy feels that the potential for support for service learning exists in her school context but is not something she sought out.

Becky student taught in a second grade classroom in an inner city school and is teaching fifth grade in the same school. Becky started at the university as an elementary education major in her twenties after traveling and participating in service experiences around the world. Her educational philosophy lends itself well to include service learning as a pedagogy because of her personal belief that teaching is about giving back and empowering her students. Becky's school provides her with several support systems that encourage service learning.

Amanda student taught in a sixth grade classroom and took a position at that school as one of three sixth grade teachers. Amanda came to the education program with a drive for the role of teacher as change agent, and found service learning to be a strong fit for this personal philosophy. Her school, which has a moderate level of diversity for a suburban setting, promotes inclusion of students with a spectrum of disabilities in general classrooms. Her team and administrator are supportive of and have a high degree of experience with classroom service, while are not particularly familiar with service learning as pedagogy.

Findings

Our findings center on the teachers' experiences as a member of two different populations: (1) as teacher candidates when they were enrolled in the methods course and conducting a service learning project as a course assignment and (2) as beginning teachers in their own classrooms, striving to determine the role and place of service learning as a pedagogy in their teaching practices. In both cases, teachers and teacher candidates are asked to consider the relevance of this pedagogy as a means of creating equitable learning experiences in the elementary classroom. The three cases of Amanda, Mindy and Becky are presented as examples of the challenges and strengths of the transition from student teacher to classroom teacher. Two of the three teachers, Becky and Amanda, have made service learning a part of the classroom learning experience. As evident in the following

descriptions, among the three teachers there is a mix of beliefs and experiences with service learning as a pedagogy.

For all three cases, data revealed there are some common themes that transect the experience of trying to do service learning. These themes include the following: (a) influence of school context and climate on opportunities to engage in service learning; (b) specific teacher characteristics that detail stance towards practice; (c) depth of understanding of service learning as a pedagogy; and (d) recognizing service learning as a powerful instructional tool for students who might otherwise be marginalized. For the last finding, a clear understanding of and willingness to address each of the first three findings is necessary for a deep and meaningful enactment of the model to support equity in the classroom. Each of these issues will be detailed below.

Influence of Context

For each teacher, positive and negative issues of context influence the likelihood of engaging in the service learning process with their students. The contextual influences that seemed to make a difference for the three teachers are related to administrator support, money and resources, time, school culture and tradition, and collaboration opportunities with other teachers in the school.

School environment. A supportive school environment can be a significant factor in a new teacher's decision to implement service learning. Both Becky's and Amanda's schools have a tradition of conducting service projects and a strong culture that supports service learning. The majority of the teachers in Becky's school are former students of the university, and had been exposed to service learning in their teacher education programs. The school also employs a service coordinator who helps teachers with the logistical aspects of their projects.

When Amanda began teaching, her sixth grade teacher team had already established a service tradition in their classrooms that involved knitting hats on looms for donation to charities. This project has gained school-wide popularity, "the lower grades can't wait to get to sixth grade because they can't wait to do the looms" (Amanda, interview, p. 4). Other teachers in the school are also doing service projects in their classrooms, "I see a lot of projects going on" Amanda explains, "and I'm sure they're doing service learning without really knowing it" (Amanda, interview, p. 7). Mindy's school does not have this established tradition or culture, and she mentioned no service projects taking place there.

Administrator and colleague support. Administrator support or opportunities to collaborate with other teachers also appears to play a key role in new teachers choosing to incorporate service learning into their schedule. Amanda's sixth-grade host teacher initiated the loom project by applying for and receiving a grant for her classroom. Witnessing the project's success, the rest of the sixth grade team too embarked on the project. Amanda used this momentum to implement the project in her own classroom, adding a curriculum tie to enhance the learning component of the project. Becky has full support

and confidence from her principal for the project, including a request that she repeat it the following year. She explained:

He was really supportive. I just laid it out for him...I told him where [the students] are going, and that it's right out of our core, so as soon as he heard that he was like, sure, sounds good, but keep me updated on how it goes. (Becky, interview, p. 3)

Mindy found little obvious support from others in her school, though she is certain that if she were to receive an external grant to do a project, her principal would be supportive. She explains that realistically for her to do a service learning project later in the year she would "need someone to come in to help plan it...sit down and think it through" (Mindy, interview, p. 4).

Obstacles of time, resources and money. The three teachers face similar logistical obstacles to implementing service learning: lack of time, resources, and money. Regarding time, Becky explained, "It's hard to find time to balance everything and make sure I'm getting in everything I need to teach...that's my biggest stress" (Becky, interview, p. 4). Her solution is to devote a set time every week to service learning and to incorporate it into different content areas. Mindy describes often running out of time for social studies.

She explains that as a first-year teacher, much of her:

Time is prep time and just thinking from day to day. I haven't gotten to [service learning] evenit's just finding the way to weave that into everything else that I'm doing. Just establishing a routine that works. (Mindy, interview, p. 3)

Amanda's many ideas for future service learning projects include establishing a pen pal exchange with American troops in Iraq, and making books for writing personal histories, but she feels she does not have enough time to plan them:

Just time to sit down and organize it. I get these ideas in my head...and I see all the things I need to do and I start doing this thing and then this thing, and then it's out of my mind, so I guess [an obstacle is] having the time to really sit down and focus on it. (Amanda, interview, p. 7)

A lack of resources and money has contributed to the difficulty Mindy has faced in starting a service learning project. There are no obvious funds for service learning at her school and she describes problems with attaining supplies for extra projects in general. She knows of a district grant for service learning, and says the grant would be necessary for her to get service learning going in her class. Amanda also describes problems with money, such as supplying yarn to students who cannot afford to bring their own.

These examples all demonstrate the importance of various types of logistical and collegial support for beginning teachers in choosing to use service learning in their classrooms. Another important factor that seems to influence teachers in the decision to utilize

service learning appears to be whether they have developed or possess certain teacher characteristics.

Teacher Characteristics

Certain teacher characteristics seemed to lend themselves towards a greater inclination to tackle service learning early in a career. Service learning is a time consuming and complex model, in part because it relies on student ownership of ideas and implementation of a project. To engage in such work is often challenging and so confidence, vision and sense of purpose, and an understanding of how to tie service learning into the curriculum are critical. All rely on the demonstration of a philosophy towards teaching that views the role as one that contributes back to society.

Confidence. Amanda and Becky both started service learning projects early in the year, and they attribute this in part to their successful experiences with the model as a part of their student teaching experience. Amanda described the confidence she gained during her student teaching service learning project:

As the weeks passed, and the service project started to progress, I started feeling connected to my students, and a connection to the reason we were doing the project. I learned that my students are very capable of caring for those that are in more need than they are, that sacrifice is something that is important and can change another person's life. I chose to be in charge of organizing our service-learning project, and I learned how to manage the little time that I had to work on this project.... I learned that I am a leader, and that I am capable of organizing large projects within my school. (Amanda, reflection paper, pp. 1-4)

Becky has a history of successfully doing service projects on her own outside of school, and considers it an important part of her life. She explained that she would have introduced service into her own classroom anyway, but the service learning component of her methods course taught her "a way to incorporate it, but also [how to] make sure they're learning what they need to learn" (Becky, interview, p. 4). Both of these experiences provided her with the confidence to organize her own service learning project.

Mindy, on the other hand, emerged from student teaching with low confidence in her abilities to successfully implement service learning in the classroom. She considers her student teaching project to have been unsuccessful, and believes her students did not learn. She explained:

The [students'] lack of understanding on a social, ethical, and academic level was my own doing. In hindsight I see that the students did not learn because I did not structure the project in a way that would have allowed them to learn. I gained new insights into how to "not" do a service learning project. (Mindy, personal reflection, p. 3)

This description reflects her understanding of the potential for service learning to be a powerful form of learning, and also her lack of personal success with it.

Vision and sense of purpose. The teachers who started service learning projects share a vision and a sense of purpose for their projects. Becky feels a strong personal and philosophical need to do service in her own life, and to impart this experience to students. She was determined that her students take ownership of the project from the beginning:

It's about them deciding what they want to do and walking away feeling like they don't just have to live in a world where they have no power, that they can walk away realizing that whatever situation they're in they can make a difference. (Becky, interview, p. 4)

She had a vision of how to organize her project, and took several steps to ensure that students were deeply involved, engaged, and committed to it. This included using literature to initiate dialogues about helping others, assigning homework that required students to contribute to the project design, and in-class voting.

Amanda, too, has a vision for the lessons she wants her students to learn through service learning:

I think that it teaches students the skills to be selfless in their community...if students learn about service early, and learn what kinds of things they are capable of doing, they will take this understanding throughout their life. (Amanda, personal reflection, p.3)

Before she began teaching her own class, she described her ideal situation:

I would allow my students to brainstorm activities, and projects in order for them to have ownership of the projects. I would implement my own idea for the first project of the year to serve as an example. I will build community in my classroom before I expect them to work well together right away. (Amanda, personal reflection, p. 4)

The current service learning project follows this vision—it was developed by a teacher, and serves as an example to her students. She also describes how working on the project together has created a sense of community in the classroom. After completing this project, she plans to begin one that the students develop themselves. She wants, however, to point them in the direction of where she sees missing knowledge, such as learning about the war in Iraq (pen pals).

Although Mindy claims to have enjoyed doing service learning as a student teacher and believes it is a valuable experience for students, she questions the utility of using it in her classroom, “I like it, so it would be hard to just forget it, I just don’t know how practical it is” (Mindy, interview, p. 4). She also described the many challenges of implementing a successful project, but did not offer a vision for how to circumvent them to create service learning opportunities.

Fitting it into the curriculum. The teachers who chose to use service learning have an understanding of how service learning fits into their curriculum. Becky explains that social studies as a discipline can inform students on how to be a part of a community, and that service learning “brings social studies to life. It’s what’s happening now, what they’re doing now to impact history” (Becky, interview, p. 4). She teaches social studies concepts through her service learning lesson once a week. She also integrates service learning/social studies into content area lessons, such as writing about social issues during language arts lessons.

During her service learning lessons, Amanda discusses issues of need, charity and being civic-minded citizens, and believes that service learning “gives kids a good awareness of their surrounding and their community and the people that they’re involved with” (Amanda, interview, p. 3). Although she does not regularly incorporate these lessons into her social studies curriculum, she consistently fits them into her teaching schedule where appropriate. Lessons on community, humanity, and history are a regular part of Amanda’s curriculum, creating natural links to service learning.

Mindy’s schedule and the demands of her position often prevent her from having time for social studies, which in turn leads to fewer opportunities to tie service learning into her curriculum. She finds that in a good week she spends one hour on social studies. Like the other teachers, she believes social studies is valuable in that it, “allows the children to see that there is something outside their little world...it also takes the classroom outside of the school and lets them real world apply it...they see that they can be a part of that community” (Becky, interview, p. 3). Although she understands that service learning can be a way to teach students about community, she also believes it may not be the most practical way to accomplish this at this point in her career.

The two teachers who chose to implement service learning shared certain characteristics and experiences, including confidence in their abilities to use it successfully, a vision and purpose, and a commitment to tying it into their curriculum. What all three of these teachers share is an understanding of what service learning means as a pedagogy, discussed next.

Service Learning as a Pedagogy

Throughout the social studies methods course, we encouraged teacher candidates to work hard to understand the distinction between service learning and service. For the three teachers described here, it seemed that their during their methods class their overall experience with service learning as a concept mattered more than the specific content or focus of the project that they did. Each was able to see it as a pedagogy and recognized that the power of student ownership made the difference in their understanding of the model and its relevance to their classroom.

Service learning vs. service. A challenge faced in the methods class was to help teacher candidates distinguish between service understood as volunteerism and service learning

with a strong connection to the core curriculum required of each grade level by the state office of education. Mindy and Becky understood the potential of service learning to achieve standards relevant to their required state curriculum. Mindy recognized that the service learning experience teaches students about multiple things and offers them a variety of opportunities to apply their knowledge in learning experiences:

They can say, okay, this really does happen in real life, or what's happening in school really can relate to what's going on in life and it's not just reading, writing, math and big deal, I go home and that's it. I think that's a big part of that, to let them see that and see that they can be a part of that community. (Mindy, interview, p. 3)

The course instructors hoped teacher candidates would realize this and recognize their role in the process of facilitating a service learning experience with their students. Further, Becky understood that it was critical that her service learning project was relevant to her instructional and curricular responsibilities as a teacher, "They're going to be learning and it's right out of our core" (Becky, interview, pp. 3-4). Becky credits the methods class with helping her to make the transition from service as "something that is really important to me outside of school" to understanding that "through the methods course I learned a way to incorporate it, but also make sure they're learning what they need to learn" (Becky, interview, p. 4) and appreciating her own responsibilities as the teacher.

Amanda struggled with the connection between social studies and service learning in her sixth grade classroom. At the time of the interview, the sixth grade was engaged in the hat-knitting service learning project for the local homeless shelter. She felt this was service learning because the students were learning to knit and use looms. She also felt that some of her social goals for her class were met because her project included all students in the activity, particularly those who often left for resource support and her English Language Learner. However, she did not see this as a part of the curriculum she was required to teach her sixth graders. While she recognized the academic potential in a project she was considering for spring semester, writing letters to soldiers overseas, she also struggled with how to best accomplish her curricular standards while working on the service learning project.

I thought like if I did some kind of pen pal thing with soldiers or something like that, I think it would really get the kids thinking and thinking about, you know, past wars, we learned about WWII, in social studies and just thinking like that, this is happening generation after generation and this is the generation that you're in and you need to know about it. (Amanda, interview, pp. 1-2, 6)

Her comment shows that she sees a civic engagement purpose and a social studies agenda for understanding war. In the same interview, however, Amanda said, "I don't know quite how I tie social studies into service learning" (Amanda, interview p. 1), indicating that there is some confusion about her understanding of the relationship between service learning and social studies instruction.

Student ownership. The issue of student ownership of the ideas for and implementation of the service learning project was something that was heavily emphasized as a fundamental component of the service learning pedagogy in the social studies methods class. Uniformly, the teacher candidates recognized that this was a critical part of their service learning pedagogy. However, Mindy and Becky were more verbal about this than Amanda who only commented that she knew it was important to “get your kids brainstorming” (Amanda, interview, p. 1). As Mindy said, “I think my biggest thing I learned from that [1st grade] class is how much they enjoyed it and I felt they really had a say in what to do and there is not a whole lot of curriculum where they have a say” (Mindy, interview, p. 1). Becky understood that her class was empowered through the experience and had the opportunity to really think about their potential to change the world:

We started with the literature and talked about … little service things that they’d done for other people. I took it from what they were already familiar with to: What are some things that…you want to change in the world, which you want to be different? So they thought about that—it’s kind-of empowering for kids to think, “Yeah, I can do something about that.” At first, they think, “No—there’s this going on and we can’t change that.” But then if we start to pick it apart, they really can. And they can change pieces of it, so we talk. (Becky, interview, p. 1)

This opportunity to learn and see their potential was something that Becky valued most about the pedagogical approach of service learning. As Becky described her philosophical approach to service learning, she pointed out:

I could make my kids do a ton of service projects, and they’d have to do it because I say so, but that’s not what it’s about, it’s about them deciding what they want to do and walking away feeling like they don’t just have to just live in a world where they have no power. (Becky, interview, p. 4)

For Mindy, the brainstorming experience in the methods class where students visualized their community and recognized the needs present helped her understand the need to include her students in decisions about the project:

When we talked about letting them brainstorm. When we sat there and said this is what we need to do with the kids, they need to come up with the ideas. (Mindy, interview, p. 1)

The influence of the methods course on Becky’s and Mindy’s understanding of service learning and their belief in the critical nature and influence of student ownership for the project suggests that there is potential to further develop this understanding through the course. The awareness of this critical role for students leads us to our fourth finding that focuses on the teachers’ understanding of the pedagogy as a way to engage traditionally marginalized students.

Responsiveness to Students

Each teacher who had a powerful experience with student learning by witnessing the engagement of students who seemed otherwise uninvolved or disinterested in school during student teaching developed a greater personal commitment to do service learning with their students. They did so regardless of the complexities of implementing the pedagogy. This experience with student learning resulted in deeper reflection on the nuances of the model and an enthusiastic response to continue service learning.

Mindy has not completed a service learning project beyond that required of her as a teacher candidate in the methods course. Additionally, her project was school-wide and she feels this limited her ability to get her first grade students genuinely involved as they collected and mailed supplies to schools affected by Hurricane Katrina. As such, she did not see a significant impact on the learning experiences of many of her students who felt removed from the project.

However, Amanda and Becky have both realized the potential of service learning to provide access to equality in the classroom by creating learning opportunities that are socially aware and civically responsive. Each described special needs students and English language learners in her class who have benefited in ways that gave them academic and social access to their peers.

Becky described how her service learning project helps her to build and expand her classroom community by including all students in the process. She has a student new to the country with extremely limited English language that the students have learned to include in their activities, "My new kid who doesn't speak any English, the kids even went specifically out of their way to make sure he got [included]" (Becky, interview, p. 5). She realizes the potential to help her build community around him, "I think it definitely will help. Especially with how we're utilizing team building stuff. That's very hands-on and working with people" (Becky, interview, p. 5). Additionally, her project focuses on working with the senior assisted living center and relies on communication to create biographies of the seniors, a skill that could further her ELL student's language skills.

Both Becky and Amanda also recognized the potential of their projects to further include the students who often spent hours out of the classroom for resource support in both the social and academic aspects of classroom life. Becky observed that her three resource students were contributing a great deal to the project and were right in the midst of all that was going on:

They've been just as involved in this as anybody else and they've had just as fabulous ideas when it comes down to it. (Becky, interview, p. 5)

This positive regard and inclusion can go a long way to clearly communicating that all students are equal and have valuable ideas to contribute to the experience.

Although Amanda did not like the structure of resource in her students' individualized education program, she realized that her service learning project offered them social support and positive regard from other students:

They really like the looms. I like it because it's something they can do just the same as all the other kids. They're not saying, "Sam can't do the looms because he's Sam," you know. He does them just the same and it's good because it gets them interacting with the kids. (Amanda, interview, p. 5)

This opportunity to collaborate on something that matters to all students is the kind of social support that helps to create attitudes that are equitable and that recognize that all students have something to offer. Becky and Amanda both recognized that their project had lasting positive impacts on the development of an inclusive, nurturing classroom community.

Implications and Recommendations for Teaching and University Education

These findings demonstrate the complexity, strengths, and challenges for teachers in learning how to implement service learning as a pedagogy in both the university and the K-12 public school setting. There are several recommendations and further directions for practice that result from these findings for K-16 education (recognizing the limitation that not all of these ideas will transfer directly to all disciplines).

Recommendations for University Service Learning Programs in Multiple Disciplines

This section considers issues specific to teacher education service learning experiences as a result of our research and also considers how these issues might be broadly construed for other university courses and disciplines.

The four findings in this research provide us with a stronger resolve to continue to engage in and advocate for service learning during methods courses. The findings inform us of the types of learning experiences and support instructors in teacher education programs should provide for teacher candidates, and raise awareness of what types of school support are needed for beginning teachers to implement service learning as a pedagogy. The three cases described here suggest that regardless of whether or not the teachers used service learning in their classrooms, and two of three had, having powerful service learning experiences in methods course clearly can create teachers who understand the value of service learning. All three developed the attitude that service learning matters and continued to express this perspective after completion of the methods course in the midst of the complexity of their first year of teaching. This would be a potentially important outcome and attitude for all university students to develop if we advocate a society committed to supporting each other.

Further, stressing the distinction between service and service learning in the methods course seems to have been internalized to some degree by each teacher. While there are concerns that Amanda did not make the connection to social studies, she did recognize that there are things that she wanted her students to learn about the world around them and that learning is a relevant component of the pedagogy, not just service. This suggests

that instructors need to be careful to explicitly describe and define this connection in order to ensure that teachers understand the relationship between curriculum and service learning. For other disciplines, this suggests that the connection between course content and service learning needs to be thoughtful and detailed as well. Clearly explicating the thinking between such curricular and instructional choices on the part of faculty can support students in developing a cognitive framework for the service learning experience that moves it forward in a way best suited for carryover to future opportunities and learning experiences.

Our findings support the notion that instructors in teacher education programs must be aware of providing the necessary support systems for teacher candidates that will ensure a successful service learning experience. Encouragement for teachers to continue service learning across the entire final year of the teacher preparation program, rather than confining it to the methods course, is an option to help teachers build a strong foundation and comfort level with service learning pedagogy to carry with them into their early career years. Again, linking multiple courses together to support depth and awareness throughout general education courses would also serve students and faculty well. Developing a system of education that builds a course sequence that incorporates service learning and allows projects to foster and build over time would support students in developing deep relationships to stakeholders and a stronger footing in the value and potential positive and lasting outcomes of such an endeavor.

Additionally, selecting site teacher educators with a commitment to service learning or a willingness to grant their teacher candidate time and resources to engage in a quality project will go a long way to facilitate growth as a teacher. Also, if possible, selecting school sites with a commitment to service and civic engagement, where principals and teachers believe in and support service learning, would provide a context that values the work required of the teacher candidates. Positive regard and enthusiasm for service learning as a pedagogy is just as meaningful for teacher candidates as it is for their students, and will help in developing teachers with the confidence, self-esteem, and knowledge base to do service learning in their own classrooms. For faculty, enthusiasm over the service learning component of the course will likely result in greater interest and commitment on the parts of all involved. It will also be critical to choose community partners and agencies that are supportive of the novice efforts of university students and willing to engage in the time necessary to support their learning about the discipline content at the same time as they attempt to learn about and meet a community need.

Findings suggest that issues of time and the intensity of service learning projects require that we do much to help them build a philosophical belief that encourages them to persevere with service learning in the face of significant classroom obstacles. The pressures of time and a mandated curriculum for standards-based testing have complicated attempts to introduce service learning into the classroom. However, findings also suggest that most teacher candidates were able to see the value and purpose of engaging in service learning when they did their service learning project with their students. This will likely be true for students in any collegiate major or program – the demands of work, school, and family are significant so the burden lies in part with the faculty to provide time, energy and

rationale for moving forward with complex, innovative, creative and meaningful projects that truly have the potential to make a difference for stakeholders. Quality learning of any kind requires a fundamental commitment to these goals and endeavors on the part of both faculty and students. The same is true of service learning.

Finally, the two beginning teachers in our study who implemented service learning in their classrooms shared several fundamental beliefs and circumstances that contributed to their decision to use this form of pedagogy. Both had supportive school site contexts, both were confident in their ability to implement service learning in their classroom, and, perhaps most importantly, the two who tackled projects were very conscious of the influence the pedagogy was having on issues of social and academic access for their students with diverse learning needs. This is one of the most important and currently relevant issues for public schools as they become increasingly diverse. Ensuring that pedagogies that are culturally responsive and accessible are used in classrooms is a critical part of all instruction, regardless of K-16 level. Service learning seems to have the potential to help teachers see the capabilities and possibilities in their students. Continued and more explicit attention to this potential in the context of the methods course will help teacher candidates make the transition to teachers who are aware of the individual students present in their classrooms. Hopefully, this would be true for all disciplines and be one way that university faculty can come to better know, understand, and teach their students by engaging in pedagogy that responds to the needs of a diverse range of learners.

It would be ideal if teacher education programs with commitments to service learning pedagogy could provide continued support to their graduates through professional development experiences, access to the university's resource base through the service learning center, and communication about the opportunities and projects available for collaboration with other graduates in the local school systems. While these steps require money and additional time, scarce resources in teacher education, the need to encourage teachers who are committed to the pedagogy but challenged by the tasks of the first years of teaching is significant. Further research on such issues would do much to illuminate the best uses for these valuable resources. Further research could also explore the potential for continuing resources in a variety of disciplines that help university graduates carry a stance of service and community engagement into their professions, be it biology, engineering or professions such as social work.

Recommendations for Faculty and Students in All University Courses

The findings demonstrate the necessary components for teachers to implement service learning in their classrooms, which we believe can easily be transferred to the components and conditions necessary for university faculty members to successfully implement service learning in their university courses. Like the K-12 teachers, faculty members need a supportive workplace climate (departmental, college), specific characteristics that detail stance toward practice (a commitment, for example, to include it in course syllabi, an understanding of one's role in the facilitation of service learning in the classroom), a depth of understanding of how service learning can serve as a powerful learning tool for undergraduates, and a commitment and understanding that the service learning pedagogy bene-

fits students who are traditionally marginalized in the undergraduate classroom (socio-economically, ethnically, etc.).

For university students, the findings from this study demonstrate the power of service learning as pedagogy for post-secondary learning. For the student teacher participants, regardless of the eventual enactment outcome in their own classrooms, the service learning component of the teachers' university methods courses contributed to their becoming more aware of the impact their actions have in their community and in society. Instead of being confined to learning in their university methods classroom and through readings, these teacher candidates experienced learning through involvement in community projects. Further, as a general pedagogy for university students preparing to enter any field, service learning experiences create the conditions for students to become aware and actively engaged in the community they will soon serve.

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